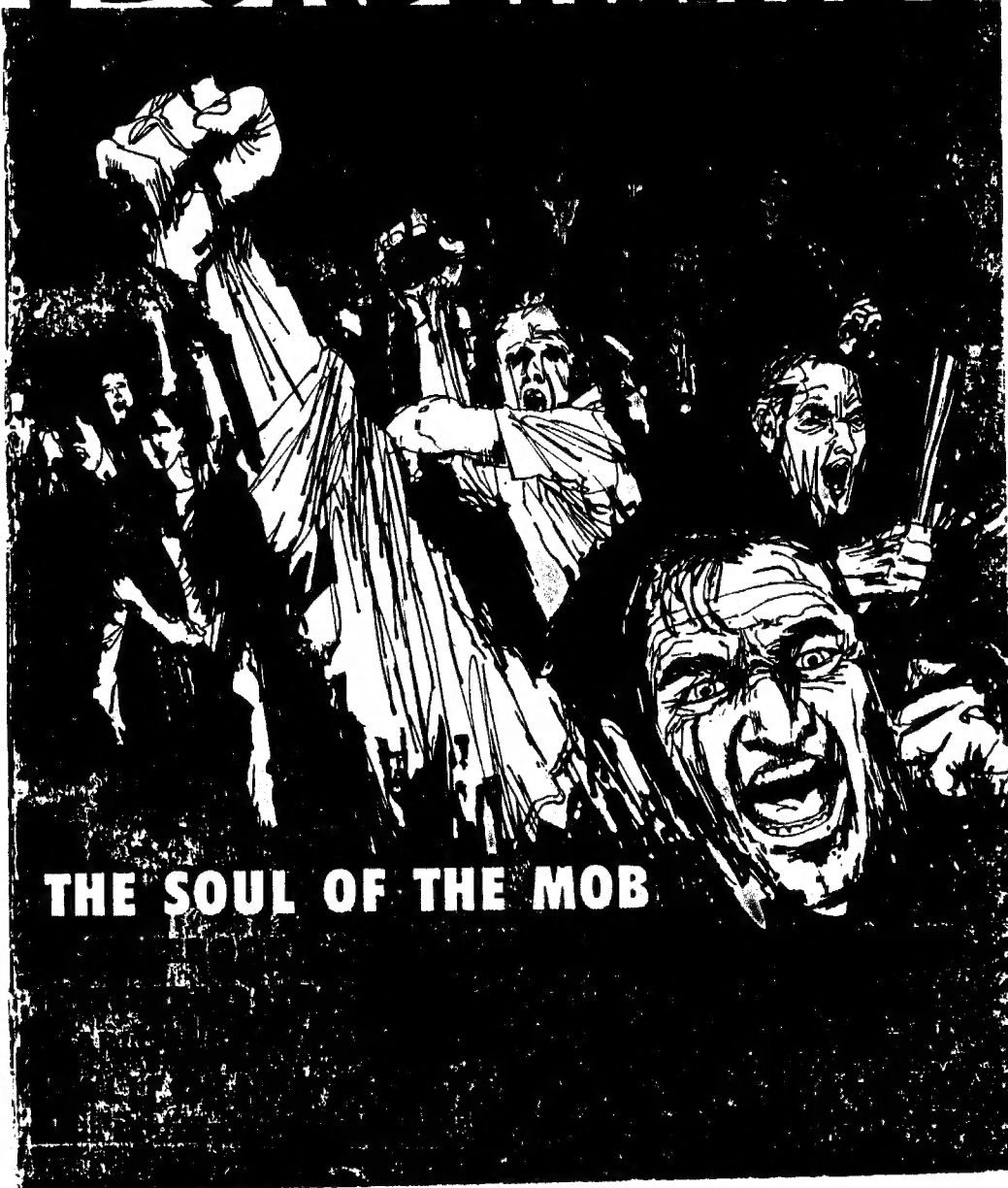


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## STAFF

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**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**  
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A bold Borderline personality who remains a controversial figure: From Dianetics to Scientology. Is he a sage or a charlatan?

## L. RON HUBBARD: AN OPINION AND A SUMMING UP

by Richard G. Sipes

**L**AFAYETTE RONALD HUBBARD first made news in 1950 with *Dianetics*, an allegedly new theory of the human mind and behavior, and one which orthodox psychologists and psychiatrists have refused to condone. He has been in the news periodically ever since. Most men of action receive mixed press; in his particular case a volatile personality has caused the press to be more mixed than usual.

Red-headed, dramatic, mercurial, dogmatic, prolific of ideas, he is a difficult man to pin down. About the only thing one can be sure of is that he is thoroughly enjoying his controversial ride through life on the back of *Scientology*, his second and more durable creation.

This has given him an organization that girdles the globe and which responds instantly to his orders. It has led to a country house in Sussex, England. It has provided him with fame, fortune, power, and the responsibility of having affected tens of thousands of lives. But what sort of man is he? How much of what is said about him is true? How much myth? To what degree has the condemnation been justified? And the adulation?

Hubbard was born in Tilden, Nebraska, March 13, 1911. His early years were spent on a ranch. Later, because his father was a career Navy man, he was shuttled from place to place. He spent several years as a boy in the Orient



where he claims to have become familiar with Eastern religion and philosophy.

## STUDIES WITH FREUD

Near the same time he also was supposed to have studied the theories of Sigmund Freud under Commander "Snake" Thompson (MC) USN, a friend of the family who had been a student of Freud. Notwithstanding the interest in psychiatry presumably generated by this association, Hubbard enrolled in a pre-engineering curriculum at George Washington University in 1930. Contrary to his claim of having received a degree at this institution, he left it while still an undergraduate. Neither did he receive a degree from Princeton, which he attended for a few semesters.

It was not until much later that he received a "Doctor of Philosophy" degree from Sequoia University. This "university," which is not listed in directories of universities, colleges, junior colleges, or trade schools, was located in a residential type building in California. He has *given himself* a "Doctor of Divinity" degree in *Scientology* and a "Doctor of Scientology" degree from the Hubbard Institute. (In an effort to allay some controversy on this subject, I should like to point out that most of his critics will agree with him that one does not have to have a string of degrees to do good and valid work. They are objecting to the fact that Hubbard says he has degrees he

does not have. They claim lack of veracity. They also object to him claiming to be a nuclear physicist and engineer when there is no indication of his having been same).

Following in his father's footsteps, he enlisted in the Navy during World War II and saw service in the Pacific. He gave a good account of himself and was wounded in action. It is to this period that one of the myths concerning Hubbard refer. He personally has claimed that he "dropped the body" — i.e., died — when wounded but "picked up the body" again and healed it in a manner the medicos found "unbelievable." The myth takes it from there.

## BODY DEATH

His followers say it was during these moments of "body death" that he "cognited," or received the revelation, of all that he was later to teach. The myth goes on to state that he immediately wrote down this revelation in the form of a pamphlet entitled "Excalibur," the reading of which, since it is so far above the "acceptance level" of humans, has driven many people insane. Other, more prosaic individuals, who claim to have read the pamphlet, say that it is a somewhat mystic tract similar to Spiritualist works on Cosmology and that it was written after the war while he was living at his parent's home in the Northwest.

Resolution of these conflicting versions seems unlikely, for the

pamphlet has been made unavailable and Hubbard no longer comments on it. There is one thing concerning his war service, though, that he will comment on; that is, his insistence that he was the naval officer who inspired the novel, *Master Roberts*.

Moving away from the speculative, we do know that he entered the science-fiction field in the 40's, writing under the name of *Lafayette*, and that he was engaged in writing Hollywood screen scripts. Most of his science-fiction stories were published by John Campbell, Jr., editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* (now *Analog - Science Fact and Science Fiction*). Some of the more fascinating of his stories belonged to the "Doc Methuselah" series. It is interesting to view these stories in light of Hubbard's later antipathy toward, and running battle with, the medical profession and the psychologic concept of rebellion against the Father Figure.

The stories took place some time in the far future, after Mankind had spread and colonized many worlds and had almost forgotten about Terra. At that time there was an age-old medical society, autonomous, omnipotent, vague and shadowy, and treated with awe and obedience by most of the planetary governments. The Foundation trained M.D.'s who then worked on a sort of free-lance basis throughout the galaxy, saving planets from epidemics here, solving interplanetary conflicts there, bringing justice to the helpless elsewhere. These

M.D.'s were supplied with unbelievably powerful, well-armed, and well-stocked spaceships and the M.D.'s themselves had been treated in some way to make them almost immortal.

To back up these potent freelancers was the threat that dire, unstated consequence would befall any people daring to harm a member of the Foundation. Doc Methuselah was one of these M.D.'s. He was accompanied by a very practical, non-human slave named Hippocrates who was forever extracting his more romantic master from peril. Hippocrates had many of the characteristics Hubbard later attributed to the "reactive mind" (the subconscious and the presumed source of all our difficulties) in that he was impervious to attack, had immense strength and a perfect memory, and was very literal-minded. Doc, despite his rather advanced age of about 500 years, swashed many a buckler and played the role of *deus ex machine* galaxy-wide through innumerable stories in *Astounding*. It is unascertainable whether or not Doc Methuselah represented a literary wish-fulfillment of Hubbard's, but he undoubtedly did for any other red-blooded American boy who read the stories. The series was well-written and fast-paced. Without question the writing experience helped Hubbard with his later *Di-  
anetics* and *Scientology* books.

The series also paid off in another way. Campbell published some of Hubbard's first essays in



Dianetics as articles in *Astounding* and generally supported him until Hubbard went off-planet with *Scientology*, at which point Campbell dropped him.

The publicity achieved through *Astounding* contributed to the fact that *Dianetics, The Modern Science of Mental Health*, immediately was in the best-seller category for several months. Dianetic "auditing" (treatment) at once became a national, then international, fad. Dianetics essentially was an elaboration and extrapolation of Alfred Korzybski's theory of the origin of neuroses (*Science and Sanity*, International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Co., Lakeville, Conn. 1933), coupled with a therapy derived from regression (or re-living) therapy practiced by some psychoanalysts. The results of this "do-it-yourself" fad justified the assertion by behavioral scientists that it takes more than reading and resolve to produce an analyst.

Hubbard utilized the popularity of his book to set up what he called the *Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation* in California. This organization blossomed and the number of students and "preclears" (patients), plus book royalties, probably formed the original basis of Hubbard's present fortune. The public fad rapidly ran aground and difficulties precipitated a move of the Foundation to Wichita, Kansas.

In Kansas, his second major publication was released, *Science of Survival* (HASI International, London, 1951) but it never attained

anywhere near the popularity of his first book (nor have any of his works since). It also was in Kansas that the organization was taken out of Hubbard's control by its Board of Directors, who presumably did not like the direction in which things were going. He claimed they were able to do this through a "sell-out" by his lawyer. Dr. Winters, an M.D. who previously had supported Hubbard, was a member of this group of insurgents. Many fantastic stories are told of this period, including the one which asserts that Winters shortly died because of guilt feelings at having betrayed Hubbard and the one that Hubbard's ex-wife (he has since married his third one) ended up in an insane asylum somehow because she had attempted to get *him* committed for observation. There is no known basis in fact for these stories.

The old organization's Board of Directors had underestimated Hubbard's powers of persuasion, however. Although they had the organization, he had the people. He led most of the rank-and-file up out of Egyptland and into the wilderness of Phoenix, Arizona. But Hubbard also had learned a lesson and that was the last time anyone but himself had any power in his organizations. From that point on it was even more of a one-man show.

The new organization, however, did not really thrive in the wilderness of Phoenix and in 1955 local pressure and his still-expanding picture of his destined role caused an-

other exodus, this time to the nation's capitol. Several of the people who were with him at this time claimed that before he left he "cursed" Phoenix and prophesied that *Scientology* would never "save" the city from its insanity. It is doubtful that he ever really did this and Phoenix appears as sane as one could expect in this day and age. Hubbard registered his organization in Washington as a church, as he had done in Phoenix. By this time *Scientology* generally had taken the form it has today. It also had spread as an organization into most English-speaking countries and by 1955 *Ability*, *Scientology's* monthly house-organ, also listed franchised auditors in over 13 non-English-speaking countries. This was the heyday of international *Scientology*. Hubbard made the most of this wave but already there were signs that things were not all they might be.

First, although the production of "clears" (completely unaberrated individuals without a "reactive mind") was advertised left and right, Hubbard had been unable to produce anyone who even he was willing to classify as a "clear" who maintained this state for longer than a few days or weeks and even then the "clears" did not appear to possess all the predicted characteristics. Second, although (perhaps because) Hubbard controlled with an ever-tighter hand, more and more groups and individuals seemed to be leaving the organization and the ranks were considerably

thinner than they had been in the days of California and Kansas.

Despite the possibility that Hubbard may have overstated his technical successes around this time, nothing he could have said would have matched the flights of imagination taking place among his followers.

Innumerable myths are levied on the periods when he was in Washington and after he permanently moved his headquarters to England about four years ago. It is difficult to attribute any truth whatsoever to them but they illustrate the process by which legends are formed (and what, if *Scientology* were to endure as a religion, probably would become dogma in a few centuries). One day, so a story goes, a couple of students were standing in the dark hallway of the Academy of *Scientology* in Washington. A wizened, small, broken-down figure sidled past. The student who had just arrived in Washington and who had not seen Hubbard asked the other, "Who was that?" "Why, didn't you recognize him? That was Hubbard." A half-hour later a large, hefty, radiantly healthy man bounded up to the lectern in the lecture hall, slapped his thigh resoundingly and laughed. "Well, kids, I was audited on the new process about an hour ago. Dropped the body right there in session. Was exterior to it for almost an hour. Just picked it up again. The Genetic Entity was running it there for a while. Here I am, though."

The Scientologist who related this to me was tolerant of my incredulity. But it seems that such things were not at all unusual on the premises. Unspecified, mysterious things were believed to happen to space and time in the furnace room of the Academy. These, worse luck, always seemed to have happened to someone other than my informants and details are unavailable as to just what sort of thing it was that happened.

Another story concerns the impressive bust of Hubbard encased in the student lecture hall. (Scientologists can get a photo of this bust for \$1.50.) One day, during rearrangement of furniture, someone moved the case to another part of the room. Within half an hour the teletype lines from England were blistered by an order from Hubbard: "Put that bust back exactly where you found it! At once!" My informant explained to me that the bust was one of Hubbard's "anchor points" by which he orients himself in this particular universe and that the moving of it disoriented him.

Another story comes out of England: *Scientology* theory apparently proclaimed at one time that extra-terrestrials had manned stations on Terra from which they "implanted" aberrations and insanities in the minds of humans. These continuing "implants" were negating Hubbard's efforts to "clear" Terra. Hubbard, through "re-living" a past life in an "auditing" session, remembered the location of one of

these in the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain. He disappeared from England for some weeks aboard his yacht. On his return he was asked by his secretary where he had been. He gave a little smile and said only, "We will be bothered no more by the Pyrenees Implant Station," and stepped quietly into his private office.

Hubbard has never commented much on these myths except to laugh but they apparently have a life of their own. Presently he claims he is approaching the state of O.T. (Operating Thetan — once defined as a person with full control over matter, energy, space, and time and who is able to create and uncreate the Universe at will).

We learn a lot about the intensity of Hubbard's faith in the efficacy of "postulates" and the power of positive thinking by noticing that throughout the years he has been claiming that *Scientology* was growing by leaps and bounds. There even were many predictions of just when everyone on Terra would be first a Scientologist and then a "clear." These claims and speculations continue into the present although one is hard put to find substantiating evidence. For example, between 1953 and 1958, there were at least 52 *Scientology* churches founded in the U.S. alone, while by 1964 *Ability* lists only 15 in the U.S., one in Canada and one in Mexico (plus, of course, the churches automatically contained in central organizations outside the New World). Even these figures

do not necessarily give a good picture of the number of people involved, for Hubbard's churches usually are synonymous with a Center or City Office and many of these are quite small as well as frequently being somewhat transient.

The Church plus Center in Denver, for instance, had a total staff of six as of March, 1964. The one in Las Vegas had a staff of two and the one in Mexico, as far as can be determined, a staff of one. Even the Central Organization in Washington — the Continental Headquarters for North and South America — had a total staff somewhere in the neighborhood of only 60. Moreover, we can compare the fact that there were 200 students in a single class in Los Angeles in 1950 to the fact that during the entire year of 1963 the Washington Academy (presumably the largest of the several scattered over the globe) graduated only 35 students from its four-month classes (the equivalent of nine to a class).

Making comparisons between more recent years, we see *Ability* listing 153 active franchise "auditors" in the U.S. in 1959, although by 1963 a special organizational bulletin was listing only 52. It is difficult to reconcile this information with Hubbard's January statement that there were two million Scientologists at that time and that the number was doubling every six months.

His salesman/politico approach to reality appears to be an intrinsic part of his personality and is

quite effective in determining and directing the thoughts of his followers. Moreover, new "processes," new organizational task assignments, new goals, new reorganizations, new "enemies," new "technological breakthroughs" and "discoveries," new localized *Scientology* successes (but not failures) flow so rapidly from him that there is almost literally no time for his followers to notice any contradictory aspects of ambient reality.

Hubbard says that *Scientology* must save the world; that newspapers are "balderdash" and "merchants of chaos," that psychoanalysis is "a world of failure and brutality," that psychology is "a deadly philosophy," that medical doctors are not "important enough to be against," that the Australian government, in "persecuting" Scientologists, has "sold out" to the desires of the U.S. government; that he has just received an "oblique bid" to furnish the Soviets with *Scientology* so that they might at last make Communism work; and that the Ford Foundation, after spending seven years and hundreds of millions, retired from mental research in 1957 because Hubbard had already solved the problem.

L. Ron Hubbard, whether he be crackpot or savant, has stepped into the borderline area in a bold, perhaps garish manner. And whether one deplores or admires him, is amused or outraged, it must be admitted that he has added a splash of color to the tapestry of the contemporary scene. ■